

The Commonweal

WEEK BY WEEK

Ways and Means

BACK in 1945-46 when the combat veterans first returned from the ETO, it was a common experience to sit in a bar and listen to a well-traveled GI give his impressions of the old world. France and Italy, with their unfamiliar ways and strange values, sometimes came off poorly. They might eat better bread in these countries than we do, but bath-tubs were notably scarce. There might be inspiring cathedrals and lovely churches everywhere you turn, but movie-theaters were primitive and in some smaller towns the people had never even seen one. There might be beautiful religious processions through the fields and impressive blessings on the crops, but modern farm machinery and agricultural methods were practically unheard of. An American at that time might hate to admit it, but sometimes he would say he honestly found more to admire in Germany than almost anywhere else on the continent. Here you had hygiene, modernity, industrialization and efficiency. As for the others—well we ought to send over teams of Americans to show those people how to live.

That is putting it crudely, but there was this feeling about the two ways of life, the two kindred cultures, and GI's were wont to put things crudely. Of course, there were other veterans who came home with great admiration for the European way and some of them even went back later. But among the majority there was this scorn for much that the European holds dear.

And the scorn is a two-way affair. It exists on both sides of the ocean. While the American may look on the European as hopelessly backward and ignorant about what life has to offer the nation with know-how, the European in turn may be equally critical of those unsophisticated, half-civilized Americans with their naive materialism and crass faith that the best things in life come off an assembly line.

That is one important facet of the problem of

American anti-Communist propaganda in Europe. When the President spoke to the American Society of Newspaper Editors of his desire for a great campaign of truth to counteract Soviet lies about the US, he seemed to imply that anti-American feeling in Europe would melt away if only the full truth were known about this country. But anti-American feeling in Europe is not wholly the effect of Soviet propaganda. It existed before there was any widespread propaganda, and suspicion of the "American way of life" would probably persist long after every Communist voice had been silenced. There are many thoughtful Europeans who have taken a long look at the American way and decided that they don't want any, thank you. When we are too persistent about its superiority, we arouse deep-felt antagonism and resistance.

ANOTHER factor is that our American way, for ill or good, has been identified with the capitalistic system. In America the word capitalism may call forth images of poor but honest boys scaling the Wall Street heights and then turning into wise, well-barbered men of distinction who serve superior highballs. In Europe the word often has less pleasant associations—long hours, low pay, exploitation and industrial serfdom. We may point out that through Marshall Plan help, French wages are even better than they were in 1938. But they were low in 1938 and they are still low. A great deal of antagonism to the US, the capitalistic country *par excellence*, can be traced to this. This, too, would be true even if there were no Soviet propaganda machines at work.

It is increasingly important that our propaganda efforts in Europe stress the fundamental, basic reasons for resisting Russian Communism. Communism is an evil thing not because it is anti-capitalist and opposed to the "American way of life" but because it is anti-human and opposed

• THIS WEEK •

Week by Week	83
Myths, Neurotics, and Heroes <i>by Geoffrey Stone</i>	87
Report on ADA <i>by William Pfaff</i>	89
Emmanuel Mounier <i>by Helene Iswolsky</i>	92
The Labor Movement <i>by Francis Downing</i>	93
Communications	95
The Screen <i>by Philip T. Hartung</i>	97
Daniel Corkery <i>by Vivian Mercier</i>	98
Books	101

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• NEXT WEEK •

CLARA MENCK of Stuttgart-Degerloch, an experienced political writer, will contribute her first report from Germany as part of THE COMMONWEAL's new series of dispatches from abroad.

"Claiming a united Germany is indispensable for all party platforms, and the official mood is an optimistic one: if we are let alone, democracy of the West will prove the stronger one. . . . A fine and courageous point of view, shared by the best of democratic youth—but not, I am afraid, by the majority of the population."

to any human way of life. There is a difference between the anti-Communism of a papal encyclical and that of an NAM luncheon address. The latter might arouse excitement here, but it would probably leave a European audience cold. There are many people in the world, we should remember, who do not seriously envy us our refrigerators and our television. But they can be reached by a campaign of truth which puts proper stress on the real reasons for rejecting Marxism. In the long run these reasons have only a remote connection with the "American way of life" or even the American form of government. We value our own traditions and our own ways of course, but even while we counteract lies by telling the truth about ourselves we can make it clear that we are not trying to impose our way on others. And that, incidentally, is one of the most appealing truths we can tell about our way.

Taxes and Brass Tacks

AMERICAN officials in Germany currently find themselves in a role which is inconsistent with the actions of their colleagues in Washington. They are opposing tax reductions in Western Germany on the grounds of making ends meet. The United States revels in many luxuries, of which one is perforce an annual national deficit—provided the red figures do not get completely out of hand. In hard-pressed Germany, where occupation costs use up more than a fifth of tax revenues, we cannot afford to permit such luxuries. For there are limits to what Congress can pour out overseas.

The reasonableness of keeping Western Germany as near to a pay-as-you-go basis as possible is not, however, the principal question about German taxes which is at issue. What Chancellor Adenauer and the Bonn Government are objecting to in such injured tones is interference. They consider the objections of the occupying authorities as arbitrary and unwarranted, considering their conviction that these changes were expertly and thoroughly worked out by their own fiscal experts. Whether to influence the coming London meeting of foreign ministers or no, they are vociferously asserting their national sovereignty. And in doing so they refer to certain Soviet charges to the effect that the democratic pretensions of the Western powers are but a sham.

Present tensions call to mind the ill-starred Weimar Republic, which students of Germany be-

lieve never to have had a chance: it was an artificial creation of the victorious Allies and it had to carry the onus for the peace terms; it led directly to Hitler. It would seem that the Bonn Government of an truncated and divided Germany is even more artificial and without substance. Can it be that, by insisting on certain measures, the Allied authorities are rendering a regime like Adenauer's perennially weak and unstable? Undeniably.

But what is the alternative? Soviet Russia adds a new element to the German puzzle which puts everything on a different basis. There is no question today of launching a divided, or even a united, Germany on her own in the immediate future. The United States has announced that we are making plans for the next five years of occupation. Russia is constantly building up her position in East Germany. Both give lip service to the uniting of the two parts, but do not come within miles of each other on the matter of how and under what auspices reunion could be effected.

The only constructive prospect on the horizon is that, somehow or other, Western Germany be integrated into a Western European Union. Otherwise continued occupation and occasional dictation are inevitable. Only then will the United States shift radically to a new role, but one that is no less active, as a component of an Atlantic Community of nations capable severally and jointly of standing on their own feet.

In the meantime occupation status must remain occupation status. To promise anything else is illusory. If the United States insists on fiscal prudence in Germany (in this case, by the way, on the basis of adequate study) no one should feel insulted. We are merely going about our occupation duties—which circumstances compel us to protract—as intelligently as we can.

A Jolt from the Post Office

MR. JESSE DONALDSON'S economies are effectively doing what neither rain nor sleet nor gloom of night have been able to do in keeping the postal couriers from their appointed rounds. Ten thousand workers who have accepted limited opportunities and wages for the security of civil service with the Post Office Department now face discharge. And while it may sound like loading the argument to bring in widows and grandmothers, it is an unfortunate fact that there are many who will miss the second delivery more

keenly than the mail order houses.

The basic decision on this matter of postal deficits was taken back in 1797 when Congress concluded that the post ought to be a public service, not a profit-making enterprise. Last year, the price of that policy was \$527-million. That was the size of the Post Office deficit.

The President asked Congress for raised rates to bring the Department's income closer to the break-even point, saying "the only alternative . . . [is] an undesirable reduction in the quality of service provided," but Congress has been slow and only the House has done something, approving a bill which would furnish about half the increase the President asked. The House bill would cut the Post Office deficit by about a quarter.

Donaldson's 36-point directive was obviously an attempt to jolt Congress into action. His move, however, calls attention to the fact that the Hoover Commission report on Post Office reorganization planned economies and efficiencies which would save well over a third of the annual deficit *without* curtailing service. The proposed reorganization would make postmasterships career jobs, would divide the Department into regionally-administered units, would clarify the accounting system (which now requires eight months to report on the preceding fiscal year), etc. The citizens' group behind the Hoover report says that modernizing Post Office structure and equipment would actually improve service.

Congress has been recalcitrant about reorganization, apparently because there would be no more patronage appointment of postmasters. The political good will that goes with handsome (and expensive) new local Post Office buildings also may be influencing Congressmen against reorganization.

Postal subsidization of businesses is another matter responsible for part of the deficit. The airlines are granted hidden subsidies through air-mail rates. While such support for the airlines is unquestionably justified as an indirect defense expenditure, it is a bad, and certainly misleading administrative practice to do it through the Post Office.

Magazines are also given special privileges in mailing rates considerably below real cost. The reason for this is a part of the public service policy of the department. It is felt that wide distribution of opinion and information is essential to a democracy. However, where the beneficiaries of this subsidy are magazines which, by

intention, are almost solely advertising media, the application of the argument is clearly open to serious question.

Mr. Donaldson's jolt may do some good in Congress, but it may do more good by jolting citizens into doing some Congressional pressuring of their own.

Another Walk?

FULL thirty years ago Signor Vittorio Orlando led the Italian delegation out of the Versailles peace conference in protest against President Wilson's refusal to take Fiume from new-born Yugoslavia. Now, nearing 90, Signor Orlando, lone survivor of the Big Four, has spoken in a similar vein in the Italian Parliament. This disgruntled voice from the distant past is again calling for a break with Britain, France and the United States—withdrawal from the Atlantic Pact—for having abandoned Italian aspirations in regard to her former colonies and Trieste.

Trieste was already in the bag when Orlando walked out in 1919. For it had been promised to Italy in the secret Treaty of London which induced her to join the Allies of World War I. But this time things are different. Mussolini bet on the wrong horse and Italy is a defeated power. British and American troops keep order in Zone A of Trieste; in Zone B, where elections have just been held, the occupying police are Marshal Tito's. And without an arrival at some new stage, Trieste will remain thus apportioned and policed. The 1947 Italian peace treaty calls for the appointment of a Governor—followed by troop withdrawals—but the United States and Russia (and other members of the Security Council) cannot agree on a candidate.

In the wave of nationalism that preceded 1914, Trieste, whose inhabitants mainly spoke Italian, was a key territory Italian patriots sought to wrest from the crumbling Austrian Empire. It has served as a fiery political catchword ever since. Likewise for a dictatorship such as Tito's, the city's final disposition is of the keenest nationalistic interest. The fuss and furor over the Zone B elections make it clear how much nationalistic passions are aroused over that historic seaport on the Adriatic.

Such are the troubled waters into which the Russians dropped a hook and line when they charged that Trieste was becoming an Anglo-American naval base and demanded that both

Zones be incorporated into a single territory under UN jurisdiction. This *démarche* provides food for agitation on the part of the Italian Communists. It keeps the Yugoslavs on edge, too, without either adding to Tito's territory or giving him, on the other hand, a chance to cite Russia as an enemy bent on whittling down her former satellite.

Most of all, it makes the disposition of Trieste by direct two-power negotiation several times more difficult. The basis for a mutually acceptable compromise has remained a puzzle, but the eagerness of the Italians and Yugoslavs to deal with each other directly has been recently manifest. In the light of the impasse over the Governor and Western advocacy, in 1948, of returning Trieste to Italy, (Tito was in the Russian fold at the time) the Allies have welcomed the idea of these direct negotiations.

But what has changed basically? Any Italo-Yugoslav agreement changing the present status of Trieste would "violate" the Italian peace treaty. Tacit consent of the victors would necessarily be involved. Russia would oppose a settlement anyway; her latest accusation merely serves as a reminder. It should hardly deter the Western Powers from continuing to encourage such negotiations. If the governments of both lands can decide upon a mutually satisfactory way out, foreign interference is unlikely. And Italian patriots may rest assured that the West will back up whatever agreement on Trieste Foreign Minister Sforza is able to reach.

N.B.

MONSIGNOR Matthew Smith, head of the Denver *Register* chain of diocesan papers has taken editorial note of recent comments on what is needed in the American Catholic press. "Most of the criticism comes from inexperienced and immature minds, who still have to discover the religious facts of life. . . . It is immature to say that the Catholic press must direct its attention to the sordid details of every labor fight . . . must forget theology and think of better housing; or must immerse itself in the 'chit-chat' of literature and 'culture'; or pay more attention to the movies. . . . Every Catholic paper worthy of the name has . . . competent editorial and columnist interpreters. What they need least is advice from crackpots and sophomores. . . . Our plant has reached the stage where it publishes 800,000 copies a week."

THE COMMONWEAL

Myths, Neurotics, and Heroes

The romantic hero sometimes seems like a man who has mistaken the road to sanctity.

By GEOFFREY STONE

THE romantic hero, it almost seems, is less an historical figure than an archetypal one. He is the person who desires knowledge or power greater than the human condition allows. If I correctly understand them, some authors even trace his beginnings back to pre-history and find his primal ancestor in the hanged or flayed god so familiar to the readers of Sir James Frazer.

Professor E. M. Butler finds the Faustian figure anticipated in Zoroaster. Another erudite English lady, Miss G. R. Levy, discovers in the artifacts of the stone age beginnings of the ideas that eventually developed to set "Orestes and Oedipus to face the Gods alone." Though Orestes and Oedipus are characters of classical drama, this lonely stance before deity is typically romantic. Robert Graves has found all true poets in love with love and in love with death—which is certainly romantic—because they are the appointed votaries, though unwittingly except for Mr. Graves, of the white goddess whose shape first rises beyond the rim of history.

Joseph Campbell, in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, seems to be seeking out faces that are by no means absent in early nineteenth-century literature, and though he does not specifically speak of any there, I do not think he would deny their presence, for he plainly holds that where men take thought there they will be. His hero appears variously to be a creator and a wrestler with the creator. Captain Ahab, the greatest of American romantic heroes, has recently been connected by Richard Chase with the incestuous and cannibalistic figures who are large in the Freudian use of mythology. And some years ago, in a book that I find far more credible in the general direction of its thought than the others I have referred to, Denis de Rougemont argued the rise of the idea of romantic love in the Gnostic and Manichaean heresies.

Whether or not the romantic revival was the revival of things it thought itself to be immedi-

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ately restoring, or was the recrudescence of things far older still, there is no doubt that the early romantics took a deep interest in myth, became seekers after some sort of Gnostic wisdom or Eleusinian mystery, and in their own way foreshadowed the sure faith in the unconscious that motivates so many modern inquiries into myth.

Perhaps it is even plausible to find a romantic ancestry in Freudianism, for German romanticism was still strong in the intellectual milieu in which Freud must have grown up. Nietzsche's devotion to Dionysius was to something subliminal in the human mind, and Hartmann's philosophy of the unconscious raised a metaphysics that, except for its religiously inclined pessimism, a present-day disciple of Freud would not find unattractive. In any case, romanticism tended toward the dark places and the shadowy outlines, which it found in myths, pre-history, and Eastern thought.

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THE errors of romanticism have called forth a large body of critical literature, a good deal of which dwells on the morbid aspects of romanticism with a relish that cannot be very different from the romantics' own appetite for these matters. But the negative points of this literature have been so well made that no one today, aside perhaps from a few young men surrounding Mr. Herbert Read in England, proposes the revival of romantic doctrines in their original form. Despite this, romanticism, so far as it is an attitude and a way of looking at things rather than a body of strict dogma, has not lost its appeal, and in the best of its literary works that appeal must still be evident even to the most intransigent anti-romantic.

One need not accept the mythological genesis of the romantic hero to find that he represents something constant in human experience or to believe that an examination of his dilemma shows it to be a situation that, in some analogous form, may be recurrent in any man's life. If at times the romantic hero seems a howling neurotic, at other times he seems a man who has mistaken the road to sainthood.

The romantic hero as mythical character, psychiatric case, and delinquent from the normal human vocation of sainthood appears in Mr. W. H. Auden's fascinating little book,

The Enchafèd Flood (Random House. \$2.50), consisting of the Page-Barbour lectures he gave at the University of Virginia a year ago. Mr. Auden subtitles his book *The Romantic Iconography of the Sea*, and it is formally given to the explication of the symbols that appear in such nineteenth-century seafaring stories and poems as Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner*, Tennyson's "The Voyage of Maeldune," Melville's *Moby-Dick* (which receives far the most space of any single work and the best exegesis it so far has had), Baudelaire's "Un Voyage à Cythère," Rimbaud's "Le Bateau Ivre," and Poe's *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*.

He draws a good number of supporting texts from sources as various as Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, Hopkins's "The Wreck of the *Deutschland*," Kierkegaard, and, appropriately enough for someone who once said there was a certain irreverence for the created order in taking literature entirely seriously, Lear's "The Jumbies" and Lewis Carroll's "The Hunting of the Snark."

Against the romantic hero as he appears in these works (and the romantic author is also a hero, as each romantic in his uniqueness must be), Don Quixote is set up as the exemplar—one of the very few in literature—of the Christian hero.

"The sea," says Mr. Auden, "... is the Alpha of existence, the symbol of potentiality." It is the symbol of the unknown element into which the man of heroic frame must launch himself to find the answers to the questions that will explain his heroism—and his heroism is equivalent to his very being. The hero voyages out to meet himself.

This is symbolic of an endeavor that has fairly plain parallels in myth, neuroticism, and the religious experience. The figures of myth are called upon for some grand enterprise that will reveal their true parentage and win them their birthright. The neurotic constantly dives into the inner sea to overcome the hidden and protean self that thwarts the purposes of the known self. The final religious effort is to surrender the private will to the Will in whose service the self realizes its full potentiality: the love of God.

Yet the three attempts are by no means identical. In the first two (if we accept the current readings of myth), it is self-love that is at work, however great the mythic hero's courage or the neurotic's torment; here the self turns inward to find the sufficient reason for its own being, seeking its goal in uncovering its genesis.

In the third, we have passed beyond the realm of the simply psychological and confront a fact that will only give its entire meaning to ontological thinking. The distinction may be a hard one to grasp and, I am uncomfortably certain, it is a hard one to put, but unless it is understood

the study of myth becomes like the worm Ouroboros, the great snake that swallows his own tail.

I think the contemporary investigation of myth has been pretty much just this—and the hero concomitantly the person elected to inevitable defeat—because, like the romantic hero, it has started from the point it wishes to discover.

If the study of myth is aimed at discovering man, it must nevertheless in the modern circumstance start with him, since, for lack of a metaphysics, he is the only point of reference available. If you deny the possibility of ontological knowledge, once you begin to examine what is not open to scientific measurement or experiment you are forced back on the human mind: your denial of metaphysics leaves no field for investigation except psychology, where phenomena are phenomena whether true or false. Although the physical sciences have brought modern man close to the point where he will have sufficient mastery of his environment to destroy it, he feels that he lives in a world to which he has an entirely chance relationship. Lacking an eschatology, man can't be other than an accident, fortunate or not, and no existentialist bravery in making the bitter choice to "be" will give significance to the fact that he exists. He is forced to retire into his own mind to find the significant—to consult a strange sign that indicates only itself!

The romantic heroes, at sea in a sieve or on a cold black pool in a boat "*frêle comme un papillon de mai*," were in this situation and the most gifted of them knew it—for testimony of which Mr. Auden quotes Melville: "Round the world! There is much in that sound to inspire proud feelings; but whereto does all the circumnavigation lead? Only through numberless perils to the very point whence we started, where those we left behind secure were all the time before us."

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HORRIBLE and ridiculous though their situation was, the romantics were singular, and to that extent heroic, in their awareness of it. They were landed in their dilemma by their attempt to escape the finiteness of their humanity, but just for that reason they remain more human in our sight than the men of the Age of Reason who, looking into their own tidy humanity, saw at the center of the universe a watchspring rather than a maelstrom. Their very aspiration toward unlimited power was a frightening symptom of the human need for regeneration; if pride tricked them into an impossible endeavor, that would not stop short of "hysteria, debauchery, disorder, grief, nor despair," to assuage the heart's profoundest want, they did not have the meaner but quite impregnable pride which Mr. Auden cites Blake as speaking against: "Man is born a Spectre or Satan & is altogether

an Evil, & requires a New Selfhood continually, & must be continually changed into his direct contrary. But your Greek Philosophy (which is a remnant of Druidism) teaches that Man is Righteous in his Vegetated Spectre. . . . Voltaire! Rousseau! . . . You are Pharisees & Hypocrites, for you are constantly talking of the Virtues of the Human Heart and particularly of your own, that you may accuse others. . . ."

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THE difference between the Christian hero and the romantic hero is not of course a difference between success and failure; the difference, as Mr. Auden says, is that one is completely self-forgetful, the other self-conscious. This difference follows on the fact that the first is entirely committed to the object of his love. The whole-hearted lover desires only the good of his love, and, since in this case the beloved is God, Who is perfect, the lover's happiness lies in whatever befalls him within God's providence: he is without ambition. It is here that the great paradox attending the various heroisms comes in. The Christian hero, who is the only one not to insist

on the rights of his "queenly personality," is the only one to save it.

The hero of myth achieves personality and grandeur together only briefly; a different Herakles is flayed to death every year and a different one is shortly resurrected—the moment of attaining the hero's grandeur is the moment of losing identity. Those who personify the forces of nature cease to be full persons. The romantic hero in his defiant despair, as Mr. Auden describes it using a figure of Kierkegaard's, is the clerical error that refuses erasure because it insists on standing witness to the fallibility of the author of the text; yet the text denies the independent existence of the thing that can only come to be as a departure from it and that in the end the text negatives entirely. Though the Christian hero's personality is the most precious of the gifts he can have, for in his individuality is the possibility of his experience of God, he need give no great care to preserving his personality or asserting the considerable dominion that resides in it, since, as a lover, he knows that what is made in the Maker's image is made good and for eternity.

Report on ADA

A look at last month's convention of
Americans for Democratic Action.

By WILLIAM PFAFF

ADA was once referred to as the United States Government-in-Exile. That was three years ago, when ADA was largely made up of a few intellectuals and some political refugees from the Roosevelt administration. As the Union for Democratic Action they had maintained an anti-Communist liberal position during the war years, and in 1947, in the grim shadow of the Republican 80th Congress, they were trying to build a political action organization for the US non-Communist Left.

Last month, on the District of Columbia's annual cherry-blossom weekend—this year sans cherry blossoms—the ADA held its third annual convention. The Shoreham Hotel, convention headquarters, was brave that weekend. It scorned the cold weather and stuck cheese-cloth cherry-blossoms around its Terrace banquet room. It didn't say much about it, but it also housed Negro ADA delegates—the first colored guests in its history.

The influence which the seven hundred delegates possessed when they gathered was plain in the glittering eye laid upon them by certain Re-

publicans. On April 22, three weeks after the convention, the New York *Times* reported from Washington an interesting—and to ADA, flattering—development within the Republican party. With such leaders and supporters as the *Times'* Arthur Krock, *Newsweek's* Raymond Moley, and *Fortune's* Russell Davenport (late of the Willkie camp), a group of Republicans was sounding the potentialities in a "Republican Committee for American Action," intended to work within the GOP, stiffening and defining its policy on such issues as civil rights. It would frankly be patterned after the ADA, and would try to influence the Republican program towards an intelligently grounded conservatism.

This interest and envy is justified. In the last three years ADA has done much that the Democratic party couldn't do, and is responsible for more that it did do. ADA saw thirty-seven of its members sent to Congress, Senators Douglas, Lehman and Graham included. It organized and led the internal fight at the 1948 Democratic convention which forced the party's strong civil rights plank. It organized the caucus which broke the power of the House Rules Committee. Two ADA members won top municipal offices in

Philadelphia, breaking 65 years of machine rule. Groups in New York, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Louisville and San Francisco also played an influential part in municipal elections.

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THE convention delegates in Washington were serious — they worked through their platform in two energetic days. This attitude is characteristic. An elderly delegate from Minnesota talked enthusiastically about the 21 Macalaster College students who had come in two cars and a hearse from Minnesota. His presence, and that of the 21 students, were indicative of the elements in ADA which are foreign to the stereotyped liberal organization. They have given the group the local strength it possesses (which in the same state of Minnesota enabled ADA leaders to all but take over the state Democratic party). They also are responsible for some of the uncertainties which became evident at the convention.

The Saturday general session was calmly checking off the points of ADA's foreign policy statement, when Francis Biddle (later elected to head the organization in 1950) took the floor with a special resolution. The slight, natty man, speaking precisely, almost bitterly, read a statement assailing "sordid and unfounded attacks made . . . upon the personal character and competence of Secretary of State Acheson. . . ." Approval was unanimous. Chairman Rauh had trouble quieting the delegates. Then a man called for recognition, asking the striking of that part of the resolution which endorsed Secretary Acheson's foreign policy: ". . . we believe that his general position is sound, well considered, and in the best interests of the United States. . . ." Rauh called for a show of hands on the protest. It was defeated on a teller vote, but by no sweeping majority.

This division over foreign policy showed itself again several times. When Germany was under discussion, another amendment was proposed from the floor. Delegates wanted the ADA to recognize the possibility of "neutralizing" Germany. Reinhold Niebuhr spoke for the foreign policy commission which had prepared the statement. He sharply rejected the notion that Germany could be evacuated in good faith by the Big Powers, could be left "a vacuum," without Soviet aggression. The amendment was defeated. Another amendment asked the convention to oppose any German rearmament, or any German participation in a European army. This was rejected on a commission recommendation.

Germany and the countries associated with fascism were the objects of considerable attention. Spain got the works. The statement on Spain, however, did not deny diplomatic recognition — one expression of the political realism

ADA's leaders demonstrated. Bow-tied and boyish Arthur Schlesinger made the point several times that it was not for ADA to recommend detailed action, or prescribe 'the techniques of diplomacy.' Archibald MacLeish, looking tweedy, and not particularly poetic, spoke for the commission on the Spanish question and defended its proposals.

When Indo China was discussed, a move that America's recognition of the Bao Dai government be repudiated was narrowly defeated.

The minority of delegates who consistently expressed doubt about this country's present foreign policy was not voicing a pro-Communist attitude. The schism was rather along the line of a "hard" or "soft" attitude towards Russia. The stand of ADA leadership, the people who prepared the foreign policy program, was "hard," sternly in accord with Acheson-Burnham-Alsop "total diplomacy." This kind of thinking prevailed without major challenge. Rob Hall, the *Daily Worker* correspondent, a gentleman with pipe, tweeds and a certain reserve, wrote that ADA "played the game of Truman and McCarthy (which is to say, of Wall Street) by parroting the Administration's fabrications against the USSR and the New Democracies of Eastern Europe."

The "soft" attitude was apparently a viewpoint which regards the Soviets not as intelligent men, but as ruffians, crude and rather lawless, and the US-Soviet conflict as a competition to prove to the world which social system is better.

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LATE in the afternoon, when the tables in the banquet room that served as convention hall were cluttered with mimeographed handouts and ashes, and an open door had blown the ersatz cherry-blossoms from the ersatz cherry tree, the China situation came to debate. There was another sort of uprising from the floor. In the back of the convention room a man made a short speech, arguing that ADA ought not say "we believe that sooner or later we will be compelled to establish diplomatic relations with the Mao Tse Tung regime as the effective government of China, however much we may detest its devotion to totalitarianism. Our continuing policy must be to counter any Kremlin policy of isolating China from the non-Communist world."

We do not know what "Kremlin policy" is, the dissenting delegate said, we ought to go down the line refusing *any* sanction to *any* totalitarian government. The commission reply was that ADA ought not specify diplomatic action, and ought to recognize that the eventual end of anti-totalitarianism might best be served in a specific circumstance by recognition. The resolution from the floor was defeated by about a three-fourths majority.

When the afternoon was finished, and people left the hall for workshop discussions with Con-

THE COMMONWEAL

gressmen, the ADA had a foreign policy platform which endorsed Secretary Acheson personally and programatically. It expressed a few reservations about policy in Germany (too soft in denazification and decartelization) and Japan ("... reactionary labor policy ... abandonment of ... original program for economic reform. ...").

While it was behind American policy, the ADA did little to go beyond it. It endorsed the Vandenberg proposal for an "unpartisan" survey of foreign policy, and, on an appeal from the floor, it called for finding genuine means to help democratic forces in Eastern Europe.

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IN A PRESS conference Francis Biddle remarked that ADA had a policy on the national level and a political mechanism on the local level. It operates in wards, precincts, and congressional districts; works in cooperation with labor organizations to "stimulate registration, make a campaign on issues and get out the vote."

Speaking of policy at the opening session, Governor Chester Bowles asked that ADA furnish intellectual leadership in the current political situation:

Today there are many liberals who are willing to discuss endlessly the techniques of political action but all too few who are willing to grapple with the tough questions of building economic and social policy.

The question of full employment for instance. Do any of us really know the answer? The economists will provide theories in abundance. But have those theories yet been pounded out into a thoroughly satisfactory program of legislative action? If so, I have failed to see them. ...

How about the whole question of civil rights and national security? Some of us glibly compare our present day witch-hunts with those of Attorney General Palmer after World War I and assume that it is only a passing phase. But the conditions today are very different. In 1921, the Soviet Union was in no position to threaten our national security. ...

ADA and the liberal movement has supported broader health insurance, broader social security benefits, public housing, and increased opportunities in the field of education. But if we are honest with ourselves, the tough, original thinking in all these fields was done back in the days of the old New Deal. ...

The domestic program ADA prepared must have been, on the whole, a disappointment to Bowles. It was safely in the Fair Deal tradition. It made an intelligent appeal for an economy of enlightened capitalism *cum* government stimulation, but Governor Bowles had said it, "the

tough, original thinking in these fields was done. ..."

The platform made a point of urging that full Federal farm benefits be granted to family size farms only (and Secretary Brannan himself repeated the point when he addressed the convention); it strongly endorsed and encouraged co-operatives, and small radio and newspaper enterprises, and it recommended government funds for capital loans to small business.

But the domestic platform contained nothing to disturb the sleep of Fair Dealers. The publicized "break" with the Democratic party—the success of an insurgent group of delegates in striking from the platform a statement that ADA aims could be best accomplished through cooperation with the Fair Deal—has significance as a change in the members' attitude toward the organization, and as an impatience with Democratic performance on certain issues (notably civil rights and the Kerr Bill) but a "break" was not reflected in the domestic program. Fair Dealer Humphrey and New Dealer Biddle may have been disturbed by the revolt, but in a press-room conference Humphrey cheerfully said that ADA is still partners with the Fair Deal; Biddle added that it's just that you can have more than one partner, the Fair Deal is still the senior partner.

ADA's delegates may be tired of the crack that everywhere Harry Truman goes, the ADA is sure to follow, but they showed no great inclination to find other paths. Curiously interesting, though, was a change in the platform dealing with the arts. Last year it recommended creation of a Federal Arts Agency. This year it says, "The cultural vitality of our nation is in the long run dependent upon the initiative of private organizations and individuals; we believe that the government can play a constructive role in stimulating the arts by coordinating and improving the cultural activities inevitably forced upon it. ..."

★

SENATOR Douglas was at the convention, grave and intelligent. Senator Humphrey was there, with slightly annoying remarks about "good liberal folks." The International Machinists were there with silly little recorded jingles about "The Guy That I Send to Congress," and Elmer Davis was there with acrid remarks about the Republicans, and the desperate need for an intelligent conservative opposition. Walter Reuther was there, making tentative remarks about the need not for just a liberal coalition of Democrats and Republicans, but for a new liberal party. Mrs. Roosevelt was there, with incredible charm. The convention was impressively vital. If it was often superficial in meeting profound problems, it also showed honesty and a pragmatic willingness to look at new solutions.

Emmanuel Mounier

By HELENE ISWOLSKY

*Emmanuel Mounier, who died in Paris the end of last month at the age of 45, was the leader of the personalist movement in France. After finishing second in his class at the highly competitive Ecole Normale, he gave up a most promising teaching career to do battle with capitalist and other dominant ideas which he saw threatening the sanctity of the human person, in the period between the wars. In 1932 he founded the monthly review, *Esprit*, on a shoestring, and soon thereafter brought out in book form his celebrated *Personalist Manifesto*. He enlisted a number of younger French Catholics in his personalist cause, but Protestants, Jews and even a few atheist humanists also joined his ranks. When the German troops entered France in 1940, M. Mounier tried to continue to publish *Esprit*, only to be thrown into jail for opposing anti-Semitic policies of the authorities. He went on a hunger strike and was finally released after almost a year's incarceration. As soon as the war ended he revived *Esprit* and the magazine once again achieved a marked success.* —THE EDITORS.

HEARING of Mounier's death, the first thought that struck me (even before the pang of grief) was "How soon he has left us!" Though almost twenty years have elapsed since our first meeting, it seems like yesterday; the "*Esprit* experience" had at that time only just begun. Somehow I could not have thought of Mounier as of one whose life-span would be short. There were in him so many potentialities to be developed, matured, fulfilled. It would have required many years to bring the experience to an end. It never will be completed now. This is something hard to get used to, because whether we agreed or disagreed with Mounier, we always impatiently awaited his reaction to this or that event. He helped us check our own reaction, work on the given problem—rejecting easy solutions, seeking the hardest struggle.

However, in his personal appearance, his ways and methods of approach, Mounier did not look or act the part of a "serious" leader.

He was young, of course, when I first knew him, but he seemed younger even than his age. Fair hair, blue eyes—a quiet manner, an engaging smile. He resembled an undergraduate rather than a teacher. Even after the *Personalist Manifesto* had aroused curiosity, interest, enthusiasm or resentment, he remained extraordinarily unassuming, as a schoolboy who has started an exciting game, and is now watching his playmates join in it. It was precisely this simplicity of manner both in

private intercourse and debate which won Mounier so many friends, while his enemies did not know how to fence with a warrior who was so poorly armed.

Though this simplicity was no hypocritical mask, it hid an extremely complex, forceful and mature personality. Mounier was certainly a leader, but a leader of a peculiar type, one who appeals to limited groups, to small separate units, not to large audiences.

★

HIS own technique of founding *équipes* (local teams), was not artificial, but quite spontaneous, a reflection of himself. Neither did Mounier seek to form these groups of local disciples through prolonged indoctrination. He knew, almost at a glance, whether the young men and young women who came to him were capable of personalist action. And having ascertained this, he let them go into action at once and with the means they already possessed, large or small.

The Christian message, wrote Mounier, did not start, as did the moral schools of Antiquity, as a philosophy addressed to the learned, but it was an appeal to every man: "change the heart of your heart." This finally was the meaning of the self-dedication, of commitment, demanded by the *Esprit* movement. In my mind it was Mounier's great merit to have reminded young men and women (his own associates) that this basic rule was essential if they wanted to play the game fairly. And one can say that all of them *did* choose and observe the rule. This was strongly felt at the *Esprit* meetings, held in the back-parlors of cheap cafés, and at *Esprit* Congresses, around the long, rough refectory tables of a youth hostel. No one spoke openly of sacrifice, of heroism, yet change of heart was the very *climate* (as the French say) of these meetings.

My own reminiscences take me back to these meetings and Congresses, and I still can recall the feeling of refreshment, of a regained intellectual and spiritual fairness with which one came out of these gatherings.

Before the war, *Esprit's* dingy, unattractive offices were located at Paris in the dingy, unattractive district of the *Gare du Nord*. Mounier worked with a staff of volunteers. There were no salaries for editor or staff, no publicity, only just enough money to pay the printer.

Mounier and the group editing each issue worked to the point of exhaustion. Often Mounier would be at the office until a few minutes before his train left the *Gare du Nord* for Brussels. He had a teaching job there; so had his wife. They were continually on the move, commuting between Paris and Brussels. They also visited various towns, in France, in Belgium, in Switzerland. Mounier lectured a great deal to various small provincial groups. His stimulating effect on French provincial youth was enormous; it seemed that wherever he went, he breathed his own soul into the local *Esprit* group.

Maybe it was this constant strain, this life of work, struggle, travel, poverty and exhaustion (to say nothing of his war experience) which shortened his days. I only witnessed the beginning, but somehow felt sure that I would see the ripening of the fruit. But it is perhaps like Mounier not to be there when the fruit is ripened.

THE COMMONWEAL

HELENE ISWOLSKY was associated with the *Esprit* movement. She is author of "*Light Before Dusk*," reminiscences of pre-war Paris, and the editor of *The Third Hour*.

Quill's Underground

THE central problem of all government is how to reconcile liberty and order. The problem is made more difficult when the government is the employer. For it is absurd that men who work for government can have the same rights as they express against a private employer. One of these rights that they cannot lay valid claim to is the right to strike.

Obviously, to withdraw the whole work force from General Motors and to withdraw it from the New York subway system is to move in different worlds. To strike against the auto firm is to stop production of goods which are not necessities, and which are made for profit. To close the New York subways is to assault the community. It is to deprive the public of rights which are fundamental. The one is an attack on the profit system—or on a segment of it—the other is calculated warfare, which cannot be withstood.

By no rationale can such a strike be sanctioned. For it is not an instrument in the collective bargaining process. The fact is that the public cannot wait out such a strike, as it can, no matter how restlessly, wait out a Chrysler strike. In the face of a subway strike, the public must yield. It is no answer to say that you put the strikers in jail. Quiet would still reign in the tunnels under the ground. A subway strike is an exercise in despotism; and only a despotic labor leader would contemplate it.

To resort to such a strike is to leave the area of economics and of grievances which involve the dignity of men. Such resort is a political exercise; for strikers, in such a case, have not defied the government only. They have become the government—a lawless, ungenteel small group to whose control the whole activity of a municipality has, indeed, become the angry, but impotent subject.

Municipal ownership, indeed any ownership in fact, of a subway system involves, or presumes, a moral order which is not presumed in the rest of industrial relations. But in a city like New York such a moral order cannot, realistically, be presumed.

Statute must define the conditions of industrial relations for the New York subway system. Men must know that that which it might normally be expected they would refrain from doing, they are expressly forbidden to do.

Such a statute is the Condon-Wadlin Law. It forbids public employees to strike. Among other things it says this:

No person exercising any authority, supervision or direction over any public employee shall have the

May 5, 1950

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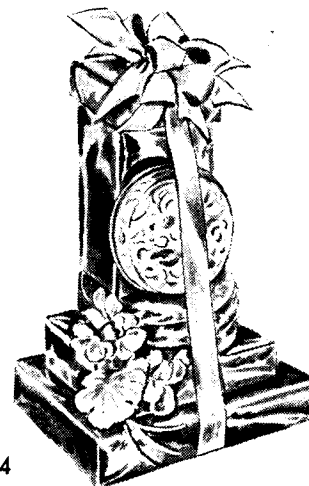
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power to authorize, approve or consent to a strike by one or more employees, and such person shall not authorize, approve or consent to such strike.

Furthermore, what precisely is meant by a strike the law makes clear when it says that a strike:

shall mean the abstinence in whole or in part from the full, faithful and proper performance of the duties of employment, for the purpose of inducing, influencing or coercing a change in the conditions, or compensation, or the rights, privileges or obligations of employment.

The subway workers, including maintenance men, belong to a union. This Transport Workers Union is an affiliate of the CIO, and is flamboyantly led by Mike Quill. Mr. Quill has always regarded the Condon-Wadlin Law as an instrument of oppression. There is no question that he wishes to smash it, either by sabotaging it, making it ineffective or getting it repealed. To it he gives no obedience short of that recommended by caution.

It must never be forgotten that Mike Quill was a child of the Communists for many years, that they kept him in office and that he followed their line. When enough men in his union, mostly Catholics and Catholic-trained in labor schools, made it clear to Mike Quill that they were in a position to unseat him, he became "respectable."

To whatever natural sense of bluster and disobedience is his, the Communists added. Few labor leaders have been more irresponsibly rhetorical than he has been. Few labor leaders have adopted such a belligerent pose. This must leave him only in his sleep. He has made the bellicose as much the symbol of his public life as the black-thorn stick he so patently affects. Pragmatism in American labor life has seldom been so naked as he has made it. He is, obviously, a formidable opponent.

★

ON the 17th of April somewhere between 6,000 and 10,000 of the Transport Workers took half the day off, and put on a mass demonstration, here in New York, in order to effect satisfactory resolution of their grievances by the Board of Transportation. Despite the fact that Quill has ordered lesser work stoppages before, despite the irritating fact that he has ordered a slow-down on the subways in June of 1947, such a demonstration had the approval and the support of Mr. Philip Murray, president of the CIO.

The whole point of such a move by Quill was to attack—not merely a sum of unsatisfied grievances—the Condon-Wadlin Law. Quill admitted this when he told the transit workers that *by their demonstration* they were "shaking off their shackles." Assuming that Quill ever means anything when he uses words, he was telling the transit employees that they were breaking the Condon-Wadlin Law by this strike. Quill was conscious that

this was a strike—although a little one limited in duration. He was conscious that he was, and the workers with him, being deliberately disobedient to law. He was daring government to prosecute him.

Now it so happens that Mayor O'Dwyer, in some measure, owes his election to Quill. Quill and the City CIO supported the Mayor during the last campaign. Quill worked most energetically for the reelection of the Mayor. Mr. O'Dwyer, according to the campaign speeches of Quill, alone deserved the political support of labor.

Clearly, then, this demonstration involving as it did voluntary absences from work of maintenance workers, put the Mayor in a peculiar and awkward position.

The Mayor, however, found himself equal to the difficulty. He told Mr. Quill and the transit workers that they had not done what they intended to do and thought they were doing. They had not been out on strike at all.

For according to the Mayor of New York:

The city has no obligation to impede the free discussion of employees when done in an orderly manner and when it does not affect adversely their employment. I would not want to be a party to preventing any group from meeting and discussing matters in their interest, provided it is done in an orderly manner and does not impair public service.

Mr. Quill must have been startled by this kind and generous legalism. For the Mayor had shown him that the transit workers had not begun "shaking off their shackles" at all. They were just as much shackled as they were before they had deliberately quit work.

It must be an upsetting thing to have quit work, at an average loss of \$5.00 and to discover that the law you wanted to break had not been broken. It must, to a transit worker, be an expensive discovery. Mike Quill had held a promise to the ear which he had broken to the heart.

But the fact is that the Mayor is spinning legalism as my citations from the Condon-Wadlin Law show. Mike Quill has had a victory, though the Mayor may have diluted its tonic effect. The fact is that the law has been violated. Absence "in whole or in part from the full, faithful and proper performance of the duties of employment" has meaning or it has none. The Mayor has chosen to give it none.

It is not necessary here to characterize further Quill and the acts of Quill. Nor is it necessary to say that neither dignity or coherence has been added to industrial relations in the city of New York. Nor that a seeming collaboration in the process of diminishing respect for law has successfully taken place.

What needs to be said is that one has real cause to wonder if the new politician, who must find support from labor, is by that fact alone superior to the one who once found support from those against whose hostility labor has come to have its present, restless strength.

FRANCIS DOWNING.

THE COMMONWEAL

Communications

Where the Author Meets the Critics

Lewiston, Maine

TO THE Editors: Walter Kerr's article [April 7] was a thought-provoking analysis of the crucial problem of art and morality. The solution seems very simple. However irrelevant to morality a work of art may be, is it not true that the artist is a human being—and as such, is bound by the laws of morality? As Maritain puts it "there is no such thing as a Catholic novel, but we have Catholic novelists."

On emphasizing "integrity" as an element of "*pulchrum*" does not the author take for granted another debatable issue: "whether art is a photographic copy of nature or something else added unto it?" It would seem that the other elements of beauty—proportion and clarity—indicate that art should be an idealization of nature—in order to bring out the splendor of the form and the ruling of the spirit over matter.

To condemn a play or a book on aesthetic grounds only would be quite an achievement and an appreciated simplification of the difficult work of the critic. Nevertheless Walter Kerr's article is constructive reading and offers food for thought to Catholic writers and critics.

(Rev.) F. M. DROUIN, O.P.

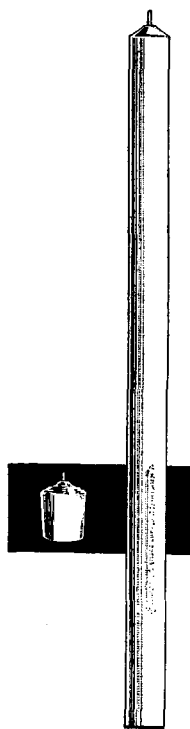
Pontiac, Michigan

TO the Editors: Will you permit me, an occasional contributor to *Books On Trial*, to comment on Walter Kerr's statement: "*Books On Trial* means that they are on trial morally."

In no review I myself have ever written for that publication have I contented myself with a mere moral evaluation of a book. A reviewer is more than a censor, he is a guide. This is, however, in no way inconsistent with his being in some sense a censor. After all, a guide's business is not only to show people where to go but where not to go.

Mr. Kerr states: "The only scale of values which can be applied to a work of art, simply as a work of art, considered as a work of art, are those pertaining to its nature—aesthetic values."

However, a work of art can never be judged simply as a work of art, for such a judgment would be incomplete. A work of art is an immobilized projection of an artist's personality, and that personality is formed by his beliefs, his experiences, his vices, and his virtues. In judging the one, one must judge the other. A discourse by Stalin cannot be judged simply as a work of art, for truths are interdependent. To say of such a discourse that it is grammatical, that the style is good, the thought is well expressed, and to say no more, would be to judge it simply as a work of art. However, that would be, in effect, a refusal to judge it. That would be to judge its matter and not its form, and a work of art simply must have form if for no other reason than that there



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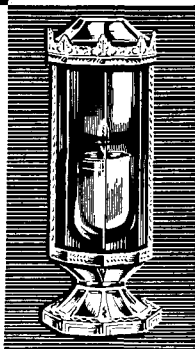
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must be an intention of the artist. Without intention we have nature, perhaps unconsciously modified, we do not have art.

Moral judgments among Catholics are made, or at least largely weighted, by the clergy. The world we live in is the product of the artists, among whom we must number the great creative statesmen. The priest must make the most of that world while trying to save souls in that world, and hence his tendency to judge art by its effect upon his apostolate. Is a book likely to be an instrument of conversion or a means of guiding the good to a higher plane of virtue? The priest will tend to speak well of such a book despite its artistic shortcomings. If it is likely to have the opposite effect, he tends to judge it hardly, happy when he can weight his judgment by pointing out its artistic shortcomings, but inclining to think little of its artistic merits when it has any. In the long run, perhaps a Voltaire may do more good than a pious scribbler; but it is a very long run indeed, and the priest must save the souls who are alive here and now and leave future centuries to the prayers of pious Christians and to God. The statues of the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome may be beautiful, but a Christian sculptor of the fourth century who had sculpted them would have rightly been suspect.

May I in all charity, doubt if Mr. Kerr and those who think like him are concerned too much about the tendency to pass moral judgments, considering such moral judgments in their entirety. Were the dangers of presenting avarice in a favorable light constantly present in

a Catholic reviewer's mind, would not Mr. Kerr be much inclined to look upon such a tendency as at worst an exaggeration of a virtue, a safeguard against the bourgeoisification of Christianity? However, the plain fact is that it is always the tendency to approach with an attitude of severity the depiction of carnal passion that really disturbs those who criticize the moralistic tone of much Catholic criticism.

I have written this without any consultation with the editors of *Books On Trial*. How wholly it represents their views I do not know, but I know it represents mine and that of the majority of educated Catholics.

JULIUS FRASCH HARMON.

On several points—especially on what it means to judge something "simply as a work of art"—Mr. Harmon seems to have misinterpreted Walter Kerr. His letter, however, represents a viewpoint that is widely held.—THE EDITORS.

Relief in Europe

LAST year the Pope's Children War Relief shipped to Austria 88 large crates of food and clothing. COMMONWEAL readers contributed heavily. One of the largest consignments went to Dr. and Mrs. Domanig of Salzburg, who have written to tell of its usefulness.

Mrs. Domanig sorted out the clothes in her own apartment and two seminarians helped to distribute them. Suits, sweaters, shoes and shirts proved of the greatest assistance to a group of students that were DP's. Pemican has nourished many students and apprentices. A great number of people who were in rather desperate straits have been helped materially.

★

THE Discalced Carmelites of Newport, R. I., have appealed to THE COMMONWEAL on behalf of the Carmelite Sisters of Lokeren, Belgium, who write: "Our convent was badly jarred during the war by a bombardment in the neighborhood. We still have major repairs to make and there is urgent need of replacing the whole roof. The cost will exceed 300,000 Belgian francs (about \$6,000) and we are already weighed down by the cost of living and heavy taxation."

"Some of our most generous benefactors were taken from us by the war and we do not know to whom to turn; at the same time we do not feel we can impose any greater privations on our Sisters, several of whom are aged and infirm. The situation of our community has become a problem that only Providence can resolve. God takes care of the birds but He does not put the nourishment in their nests; they themselves must build their nests and seek their own food." Hence the Carmelites appeal to the charitable readers of this magazine for the crumbs from their tables. (Carmel, 9 rue de la Caserne, Lokeren, Belgium.)

THE COMMONWEAL

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The Screen

SING A SONG OF SICK PENSE

NO one says that it wasn't brave of Columbia Pictures to make a movie about cancer (no braver perhaps than the studios which made films about Negro prejudice in the United States, about insanity or made movies from the plays of Eugene O'Neill with subject matter certainly not on the pleasant side) but it seems to me that this studio, and the other studios, too, are using "*No Sad Songs For Me*" too much as a test case. No doubt if this picture is successful, we shall have a cycle of films about cancer and other illnesses not usually discussed freely. There are already a couple of movies about paraplegics about to be released. I realize that the studios, even those which strive to make artistic, honest films, have some interest in the financial side of their business. So when a studio does try a new subject, it deserves applause for being courageous. But the film itself has to be judged on its own merits.

"No Sad Songs" actually faces the issues quite frankly. It calls a spade a spade as it goes into its story of a woman who is told she is not pregnant as she thinks but that she has cancer in advanced stages and has at the most only ten months to live, for six of which she may still be on her feet. Thanks should go to Producer Buddy Adler and to Director Rudolph Mate for their direct handling of this subject, and especially to Margaret Sullivan for her excellent performance in the role of the cancer victim. It is good to see Miss Sullivan on the screen again after such a long absence. Her winsome acting is well suited to this portrayal of a suffering woman who must decide what she should do with the time left her. But when the script gets around to these decisions, the film and I part company.

Some of the scenes are well done, those putting over Margaret's attitude toward the this-is-the-last-time feeling and those in which she tries to prepare her young daughter (Natalie Wood) to stand on her own feet and remember the many good things about her mother. But in Margaret's relationships with her husband (Wendell Corey) the script sinks to soap-opera level. While women audiences may shed many a tear as Margaret tries bravely to save her husband by not telling him of her illness, the men in the audience will writhe with embarrassment. The American male has been pushed around by mom, sweetie, wife long enough. The time has come for him to be in on the facts of life too. When Wendell is finally told by the doctor that his wife is soon to die, he is as much upset by the secret having been kept from him as by the situation itself. The doctor's excuses are pretty lame.

"No Sad Songs" has another angle, by the way, that will ruffle men's tempers. At one point Wendell becomes more than a little interested in a woman (Viveca

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Lindfors) who works in his office. He realizes he is falling for this woman, and they part—on friendly terms. But Margaret, knowing that she is soon to die and being on the lookout for her husband's future happiness, asks the other woman to stick around. Viveca sticks around and is conveniently on hand to help the father and daughter bear their loss.

Religion is not mentioned in "No Sad Songs," and even when the wife considers suicide, the moral problems are only skimmed over. What the film emphasizes instead is this particular woman's bravery in facing a grim situation. "No Sad Songs for Me" will no doubt wring many a tear, but let's hope if the theme is presented again, the film makers will go even further in their realistic realism.

★

IN ITS way "*The Big Lift*" also deals with illness, the illness of a whole country. This movie is praise for the men who answered Russia's blockade of Berlin with planes and supplies. But the background of the picture, after we have seen many a shot of the fine job that these fliers did in Operations Vittles, is Germany—a sick, defeated Germany which needs almost as much straightening out now as it did under Hitler. Cinematically, "*The Big Lift*" is excellent. Director-writer George Seaton has succeeded in getting movement into a film that could have been talky and static.

If one wants to, he can see the plot packed with symbolism. The film has two main heroes: one, played by Montgomery Clift, is that sweet, shy, likable American boy; the other played by Paul Douglas is the big, tough, gruff American guy. Put together they spell America. Montgomery falls for a girl in Berlin, is idealistic, wants to marry her and take her back to United States. Paul has a girl in Germany too, but he's a little cruder in his treatment. In fact Paul is down on all Germans and he's pretty mean to them until the day when he meets up with the German who was guard of his prison during the war. Paul beats him up and releases all the pent-up fury he's been wanting to spill against the Germans ever since he returned to Berlin.

Although I hate to tell you this because it is kept as the big surprise at the film's climax, it turns out that Montgomery's girl has only been using him. So your heart bleeds for Montgomery, you have worked off your aggressions with Paul, and from then on you're ready to get down to business with the Germans. Now we know some of them are good and some are bad, and through Paul's lectures on democracy, we know that the good Germans will eventually come around to our way of thinking. "*The Big Lift*" makes our way of thinking quite attractive. Clift and Douglas and all the men of the Air Force who play themselves help put over the argument. This film is not a documentary, but with its well-photographed shots of the airlift in action and of the city of Berlin, and with its simple, effectively told story, the picture is extraordinarily real.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

Daniel Corkery

By VIVIAN MERCIER

WHAT makes a great short story? No self-respecting critic likes to ask such a big, vague question, for fear his own answer will prove just as vague and several sizes smaller. But the question must be asked when one is confronted with a handful of really great short stories by a writer who is virtually unknown in the United States. Not all the stories in *The Wager and Other Stories* (Devin-Adair. \$2.75.) are great, or even technically flawless; the more reason, perhaps, for inquiring what it is in some of them that puts Daniel Corkery momentarily on a par with the great masters of that form.

The modern short story, to my mind, has usurped many of the functions of lyric poetry, just as the novel in earlier centuries invaded the territory of the epic. Therefore the great short story tends to possess certain of the qualities of a great poem. Like a burning-glass, it focuses rays from a great distance upon a tiny piece of tinder, with such intensity that in a moment the tinder becomes incandescent. Very often the focusing medium, as in poetry, is a symbol which can stand for many things and so concentrate many diverse rays at a single point.

The story, "Rock-of-the-Mass," for instance, shows the focusing process at work. In 22 pages, during the course of a single evening, a man's whole life and character is made to glow before the reader with that incandescence to which I have already referred. We first see the old farmer, Michael Hodnett, asleep before the door of his farmhouse in Dunerling East, a once dilapidated feudal estate which he has made into the model farm of that section of County Cork. Stephen, one of his sons, is home from America on a visit, bringing with him his American wife and her widowed sister. A great family reunion is under way, and Michael has fallen asleep while waiting for the "Yanks" to return from an automobile jaunt in the neighborhood of the stony little holding, Carrig-an-Afrinn, whence he moved to the rich acres of Dunerling East.

As his thirty-one milch cows pass by him on their way to be milked, Michael awakes and says to the son who is driving them, "'Tis often I do be thinking on the two beasts we had and we coming hither from Carrig-an-Afrinn. Scraggy animals, scraggy, splintery things."

At tea, with all his family once more around him, Michael is stirred to unusual loquacity by the mention of the many familiar places passed by the visitors in their motor ride. He speaks first of his reckless youth, then

VIVIAN MERCIER is working on an anthology of the Celtic revival. He teaches modern literature at both Columbia University and the City College of New York.

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of the day on which he signed the agreement to take over Dunerling East. Carrig-an-Afrinn (Rock-of-the-Mass) was the name not only of his old farm, but of a particular rock on it where Mass had been said in the days of the persecution.

On the day he made arrangements to leave the place, he learned something he had never known before. "Tis what I heard: In any place where a Mass was ever celebrated an angel is set on guard for ever and ever." He began to wonder if he was right in leaving so auspicious a locality. However, he went ahead with his plans and prospered—but at a cost. The labor of bringing Dunerling East to its present state has killed three of his sons, a daughter, and his devoted wife; another overworked daughter is now little better than a lunatic. Still, it has always been a comfort to him that from a hill on his new farm he can see a corner of Carrig-an-Afrinn. Some day soon he is to be taken over in the car to see the old place and the Rock itself.

When Michael's monologue has reached this point, Nicholas, the son who has stayed on the farm, brings out his violin and begins to play. In an interval, while tuning the instrument, he whispers to the American widow:

"He'll never see Carrig-an-Afrinn again."

"No?" she whispered back with a little gasp of surprise.

"Nor nobody else," he went on, "they're after blasting it away to make the road wider: 'tis how two lorries couldn't pass on it. I'm in dread of my life he'll find it out. 'Twould be terrible."

The Rock, then, stands for everything that Michael has had to turn his back on in his career of self-aggrandizement, stands almost for a whole way of life. But perhaps the most significant thing about this symbol is that Michael can never turn his back on it entirely; he must be forever looking backward at the old farm from the new, and wondering if he really has made the right choice. At the end, when we learn what has happened to the Rock itself, we feel that Corkery is expressing disapproval of the new Ireland, which has chosen the way of "progress," like Michael, without being too sure of where it is going.

This story, while not deliberately written to exemplify a critical theory of Corkery's, does in fact show him practicing what he preaches. In his excellent critical study, "Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature" (1931), he drew a blueprint of what Anglo-Irish literature should be:

The three great forces which, working for long in the Irish national being, have made it so different from the English national being, are: (1) The Religious Consciousness of the People; (2) Irish Nationalism; and (3) The Land.

★

OF THE forces that have molded Daniel Corkery himself, we must put Irish Nationalism second only to Catholicism. Born and brought up in Cork City, he made contact with the Land chiefly in vacation time. His participation in the cultural side of the national movement first turned him to writing. Douglas Hyde

THE COMMONWEAL

founded the Gaelic League to foster the study of the Irish language in 1893, when Corkery was fifteen; seven years later the Irish Literary Theatre put on its first two plays in Dublin. Corkery played an important part in both the language revival and the dramatic revival in Cork. But first he had to find a way of earning a living. Educated at the school of the Presentation Brothers in Cork, he became an elementary school teacher at the age of twenty, and continued to follow the teaching profession in one form or another until 1947, when he retired from the Chair of English at University College, Cork, after a sixteen-year incumbency.

It is hard to assess Professor Corkery's personality on the basis of a single meeting; he prefers to make his visitors do the talking, and brings to this task all the guile of one who has been a teacher for fifty years. The man who more than any other fostered and "drew out" the innate talent of Frank O'Connor and Sean O'Faolain has no desire to shine at the expense of others. In fact, his urge toward self-effacement is so strong that he can probably be known best through his books. The photograph on the jacket of *The Wager* is a faithful one, yet it does not tell much; here is a small, anxious man, to whom his seventy-two years seem to have brought little serenity, and the whole expression of the face is one of shrewd inquiry. Yet one sees no hint in it of the broad culture that lies behind the ruffled forehead. American, Russian, French, German, English, Gaelic literature are all equally alive to him, although he has rarely been more than fifty miles from his native city.

The apparent lack of serenity is indeed a true index to the writer, if not to the man. He took as the epigraph to his only novel *The Threshold of Quiet*, Thoreau's aphorism, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation," and most of the characters in his short stories are troubled souls, divided against themselves, who find no convenient resolution of their inner contradictions. Almost every story contains a moment of passionate self-knowledge and self-revelation on the part of one of the characters which is the climax and the justification of the whole anecdote—as when the old man in "The Emptied Sack" cries out, "My heart is a cage without a bird, I'm an empty sack!"

Books

The American Mind. Henry Steele Commager. Yale University Press. \$5.00.

PROFESSOR Commager's *The American Mind* may fairly be described as an extension, with some shift of emphasis, of Vernon Parrington's widely known *Main Currents in American Thought*. The comparison is not



THIS WONDERFUL SPRING

has cheered us up no end—never before have so many people liked (to the extent of actually buying them) so many of the books we liked (to the extent of actually publishing them). **Father Trese's VESSEL OF CLAY** (\$2) and **Lucile Hasley's REPROACHFULLY YOURS** (\$2.25) have led the parade, as we have remarked before—no two books ever ran away with the sales more gaily. But even without them we should have been pretty happy—everybody likes **John Beevers'** revealing (that really *is* the right word for once) biography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, **STORM OF GLORY** (\$3); and everybody it seems is going off to Rome armed with **John Farrow's PAGEANT OF THE POPES** (\$4.50)—or are the ones who have to stay at home giving it to themselves as a consolation present? And more people than you would suppose are bravely taking a look at the whole subject of Christian poverty with the help of **Father Régamey's POVERTY** (\$2.50), a really constructive book, even if the subject is one which most of us feel we know almost enough about from our own experience. The thing is, if we've got to be poor anyway, we might as well know all the advantages—we know the disadvantages well enough. **Father Danielou's SALVATION OF THE NATIONS** (\$2) was liked rather too well and went straight out of stock—more soon, we hope.

But the prize of the list is **Msgr. Knox's** second volume of the **OLD TESTAMENT** (\$5). If you don't want to risk \$5 without seeing what it's like, be sure you get the May issue of **Sheed & Ward's OWN TRUMPET**. The whole of the Cantic of Canticles (he calls it the Song of Songs) is on the centre spread, with a border of illustrations in color by **Jean Charlot**. If you don't get the **Trumpet**, ask **Lucy MacGill** to put you on the list—it comes every two or three months, free and post-paid.

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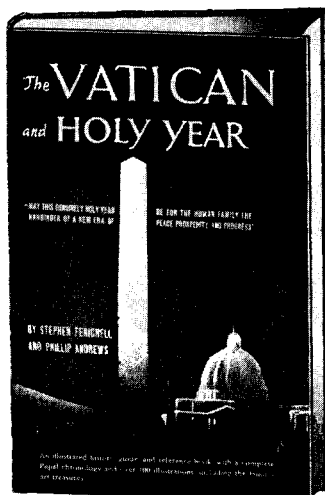
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invidious, since Professor Commager announces himself a disciple of Parrington in his preface and later recounts the work of this scholar in terms of encomium. Parrington's study extended into the middle twenties; Professor Commager, taking the eighties of the last century as a "watershed" period, brings his account down to the present date, in a style of presentation reminiscent of the earlier work. It is generally recognized that Parrington adopted as his point of view the economics of Jeffersonian democracy. To what extent this provides an approach to all aspects of American culture is, of course, debatable, and in fact his cursory treatment of figures like Poe has scandalized students of American literature. But the point of view is capable of precise formulation, and it had the effect of illuminating considerable areas of American thought and experience.

Professor Commager's approach, or principle of interpretation, does not match this in clearness of focus. But one may readily infer from his chapters on evolutionary philosophy, pragmatism, and the new jurisprudence, together with the picture of William James as frontispiece, that he regards pragmatism as the chief current in the period he has chosen to describe.

It is very common in expositions of this kind for the chief current to become also the touchstone of evaluation; and despite some obvious efforts to chronicle fully, one finds Professor Commager's enthusiasm reserved for topics such as the science of society, the socialization of Christian doctrine, and the jurisprudence of Holmes, with its pragmatic adaptation to social ends. These, and the movements that are comprehended under them, tend to constitute what is distinctively American, and add up, by his calculation, to what is valid in American life. Anyone is free, naturally, to adopt this principle, and we can even feel grateful to the author for making the application and providing an opportunity to assess the outcome.

Perhaps the most striking feature of this work as a cultural history is the failure of the facts and the conclusions to appear in a clear relationship. In some passages the author seems unable to account for data which, with the fidelity of a chronicler, he has incorporated into his story. In other passages he seems nonplussed by results which were plainly implicit in the conditions he has rehearsed. This is tantamount to saying that his theory of causation is inadequate. The "good" causes seem by his own report, though not by his inference, to be causes of the "bad" results.

UNDERLYING the entire exposition is a theory of progress which may be exemplified by his sentence "Nothing in all history had ever succeeded like America, and every American knew it." This success is, on the whole, attributed to the willingness of Americans to be guided by practical results, and no one can deny that they have achieved outstanding successes of this *ad hoc* variety. But this can be progress in the most degraded sense, and Professor Commager is always having to wrestle with its manifestations.

How, for example, does such theory of progress accommodate the fact that "no twentieth-century statesman accomplished so much as Jefferson, and none enjoyed so much leisure"? Why is it, if progress signifies gain and not loss, that today almost no home builder has available to him skills like those of the "nameless craftsmen who built the New England villages of the eighteenth century"? What is there to tell us why "the popular culture represented by the lyceum or the Chautauqua of earlier generations was more sophisticated than that of the radio"? What explains the gulf separating "the *North American Review* from the *Reader's Digest*, or the old *St. Nicholas* from the comic strip magazines"? Where are our terms to account for the fact that "there seemed to be, in short, a progressive atrophy of the creative instinct of the average American"?

The truth expressed in the statement that "Of all the philosophies to which Americans have subscribed, pragmatism lent itself almost inevitably to vulgarization" is not irrelevant, as Professor Commager contends, but is an important link in a chain of causation which he has largely ignored or obscured.

These citations should illustrate how the trends which he holds in most esteem will appear to some minds the causes of things he deplores. The charge here is not that he fails to cover everything, but that his principle of interpretation fails to account for what he does cover. Such is bound to be the effect of riding two horses at the same time. One of them is patriotic eulogy of the American way; the other is depiction of the modern American scene, for which there are objective requirements.

THE prevailing weakness of the work is that the descriptive and the evaluative tend to get mixed up, and I should say that this very ambiguity lurks in the author's phrase "evaluation of what is characteristically American." The characterization of what is American and the evaluation of it are perfectly legitimate undertakings, but they proceed from different bases. To overlook this is to ignore the difference between the positive and the dialectical, which is never done but at the expense of confusion. As a result, although *The American Mind* presents considerable information and offers a few good insights into circumstances, the picture as a whole is blurred.

Finally, I hope it will not appear caviling to ask whether pragmatism can properly be described as a mind at all. It is a method, perhaps a mood, but it cannot be called a mind for the same reason that it cannot be called a philosophy. A mind is a system of thoughts, not all of which are immediately validated by experience. Here the standard of pragmatism leads to the same collapsing of narration and evaluation which is visible in parts of Professor Commager's book. But the Americans have more in their heads than this would give them, and may be credited with a mind. The story of its formation must be—to borrow language the author uses in another connection—also "economic, social, and moral."

RICHARD M. WEAVER.

May 5, 1950



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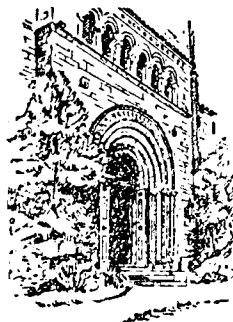
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The Greater Trumps. Charles Williams. Pellegrini & Cudahy. \$3.00.

A BOOK reviewer has his occupational hazards, too. For example, his reading is chosen for him by an editor who doesn't give a tinker's dam for the reviewer's personal preferences. But it can be a compensation as well as a hazard, this benign tyranny. It can broaden a man's outlook, even while it may leave his tastes unchanged.

Certainly *The Greater Trumps* never would have coaxed three dollars out of my pocket. The dust-cover's promise of "The story of two young lovers who sought to find through magic cards powers which belong to God alone," has no charms for a conservative cleric who lumps the occult and Superman together, and prefers his mysteries cut strictly to the Scotland Yard and Center Street pattern.

It now seems that even the Church, in her lower echelons at least, can be wrong. Charles Williams' novel, begun under compulsion, was pursued in fascination, and finished long past bedtime. At the end, it was easy to understand the high reputation of the author—a man who has wedded mysticism and fantasy with such plausibility.

The Greater Trumps is the story of a deck of cards—and it seems there really are medieval curiosities known as Tarot cards. It is the story of the Greater Trumps of the deck, the Juggler, the Hanged Man, the Devil, and the other nineteen. More important than the cards are the twenty-two golden figures which are the archetypes of the cards, figures designed by a seer who had discovered the secret of the rhythm of the Universe, and who had set them dancing perpetually in movements which only the Tarot cards could interpret. Aaron Lee of gipsy blood has the golden figures and a handsome grandson; Lothair Coningsby has the Tarot Cards and a comely daughter. When they meet, the Living Cloud, the cloud of the beginnings of things is unleashed, and Aunt Sibyl the contemplative, who has discovered long since that God is Love, is the only one who walks through the cloud unopposed.

Charles Williams in his writing displays many gifts: a fine discernment in the creation of his characters, for whom he has a very evident affection; a quiet humor and a gentle irony; an artist's touch in the use of words and the flow of his narrative. But above them all is the prodigality of his imagination. Not the crass imagination of a planetary space-ship impresario, but a deft, suggestive, challenging sort of imagination that makes one think of Titian with overtones of Dali. I am sure that at least one-eighth of the time I did not know what Mr. Williams was talking about; but I was always serenely confident that a meaning was there if only I could grasp it.

There is depth to the story. The name of the Deity appears only when Mr. Coningsby or Aunt Sibyl says, "Good God," (each with diverse intent), yet the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ is here, for all its fancy dress. Theology walks through the pages like a

THE COMMONWEAL

Passion Play done in tuxedos and trains.

This last of Charles Williams' preternatural fantasies (the author died in 1945) may not be his best; I have not read the others. But it is good enough to make one wish—somewhat forlornly—that it might rise on the list of best-sellers, to replace some of the tripe by which men vegetate.

LEO J. TRESE.

The Liberal Imagination. Lionel Trilling. Viking. \$3.50.

I FOUND *The Liberal Imagination* to be a remarkable book. My reasons do not lie entirely in its diversity, though Lionel Trilling's essays include "Huckleberry Finn," "The Kinsey Report," "Wordsworth's Immortality Ode," "Tacitus," "F. Scott Fitzgerald," and "Art and Neurosis," among others; and though I was tremendously impressed by its power of mind, the ability to make order out of great complexity; there was something else, above all, that I found remarkable and new. I did not hear criticism talking to me, but a man, who has a moral intelligence as well as a critical one. He is sound, he is serious, he is ambitious, but what is more important, he takes an individual responsibility for these qualities. The criticism in this book is not a self-conscious one and it does not come under the category of criticism for its own sake and in its own defense; it is characterized by a readiness not to take refuge.

This amounts to a very ambitious and individual effort to reestablish criticism in a living context. Lionel Trilling has courage. The risks that are being taken nowadays are in favor not of the individual but society; they even go beyond society to the abstract, the ideological. The dramatic part of our lives is that which is beyond our control, beyond the human context. One result, as he says in his essay on Art and Fortune, is that "human life as an aesthetic object can perhaps no longer command our best attention; the day seems to have gone when the artist who dealt in representation could catch our interest almost by the mere listing of the ordinary details of human existence; and the most extreme and complex of human dilemmas now surely seem to many to have lost their power to engage us."

The challenge, as he puts it, is to restore and reconstitute the will. We must take hold of complexity. We will not be able to understand ourselves through ideas of a simplicity which does not exist. In that connection he takes Americans to task for some of their illusions. Discussing V. L. Parrington's thought, and Theodore Dreiser, he very effectively questions our obsession with "reality," which we think of as the vigorous; the actual; "real life"; as against certain other ill-defined terms like "idealistic"; "romantic"; or "genteel." In an appraisal of *The Princess Casamassima*, he gives quite effective proof, it seems to me, that Henry James knew considerably more than Dreiser did about social and political reality. Criticism in America can limit itself by being tyrannical and single-minded on behalf of any one idea, let alone

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that of "reality." The job of criticism, as Trilling sees it, "is to recall liberalism to its first essential imagination of variousness and possibility, which implies the awareness of complexity and difficulty." The only reality to which he would commit himself is a moral one, by which he does not mean "moral righteousness," to which so many of the "real life" advocates are prone, but the will to face our lives and condition and to ask "what might lie behind our good impulses."

Having come to this point, he then thinks a further effort is required. He defends his "moral realism" in the name of "simple social practicality." Because the world's complications are tremendous and for the most part conceived of in social terms he calls for a further definition of literature in that direction. In the essay called "Manners, Morals and the Novel," he elaborates the thesis that the novel is based fundamentally on "manners," which are part of the bedrock, *real* reality of our social existence—"in the novel manners make men." In two novels that he mentions, "the question of the nature of reality" is evoked, "by contriving a meeting and conflict of diverse social classes and taking scrupulous note of the difference of manners."

I AM NOT sure that a theory of criticism in terms of manners, or social class, or politics, is required after Lionel Trilling's first fine statement on behalf of the restoration of the will and moral responsibility. In a sense he restricts his own purpose and vision. Complexity and variety must be faced, and so he says, and strongly, but literature has dealt with the quality of life in other contexts than that of politics, or social class. Any further efforts that criticism makes toward definition must keep pace with what is unpredictable, implausible, and even disassociated in literature. What is most valuable about *The Liberal Imagination* is the assertion that criticism is in the service of the creative effort, that its responsibility is moral and human, and that where literature has the courage of its imagination, criticism must accompany it.

JOHN HAY.

The Cocktail Party. T. S. Eliot. Harcourt. \$3.00.

T. S. ELIOT has always been seriously concerned in his poetry and criticism with the sterility of modern life, the encroachments of secular standards, the obstacles which contemporary institutions place before the spiritual progress of men in our time. He has always affirmed the "primacy of the supernatural over the natural life."

Ten years ago, for example, Eliot wrote that our society was a negative one, and that it would become pagan without a resurgence of Christian principles. His main idea at that time was not the establishment of an actual society, but rather an examination of the elements of a Christian society (his greatest hope was in a "clerisy," a group of intelligent and honorable persons—the elite of the Community of Christians), and an at-

tempt to reveal how this kind of society differed in value and in end from a neutral and pagan society.

That values in our civilization are distorted is an axiom which precedes this new play. It considers, in a modern setting, certain conditions which affect people in a neutral society; the setting is a symbol of a trivial, hedonistic principle, but it is really a structure for Eliot's serious remarks about modern man in modern society.

LAVINIA CHAMBERLAYNE has left her husband, Edward, on the day she had scheduled a cocktail party. Edward, although he has never been in love with his wife, and has been having an affair with Celia Coplestone, finds, after speaking to the Unidentified Guest, that he wants his wife back. Celia, herself loved by Peter Quilpe (who attended to Lavinia's wants), is happy to hear of the flight, then upset by Edward's change of heart, and is finally resigned when she becomes aware of his real or different nature. The Unidentified Guest, later shown to be Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly, a diagnostician of unusual powers, is assisted in his ministrations by Julia Shuttlethwaite and Alex Gibbs (the Guardians). These three are the charismatic personalities who direct the others to their destinies. They are the voices, the clerisy in this rhythmic drama.

Edward and Lavinia are convinced that they should rejoin because one is incapable of loving, the other incapable of being loved, because each moment is a new beginning and life is only keeping on, because they must make the best of a bad job. Celia goes into a nursing order, and later to a crucified death because she feels that ordinary life is a delusion, because she experiences the state of solitude, because she believes in sin, and because she wants "to be cured of a craving for something she cannot find and the shame of never finding it."

Eliot's writing makes most of the current plays puny in comparison. This thing is distinguished by his intelligence, his good sense and his talent. And, despite the limited action, this is a workable play; on the stage it gains force and tension which are not realized in the written pages alone. But there are questionable qualities in language and idea which should be mentioned, and they are not caused by poetical obscurity. When Edward is described as looking like a school-boy called into the headmaster's office, or like a little boy who has lost his way in a forest, or like a mummy unwound, there is a suspicion that Eliot has used automatic similes.

When Celia says "I'll never go into your kitchen again," the effect is queasy. Furthermore several lines are inharmonious and unsubtle and disconcerting. The use of conventional comparisons could be defended on the ground that ordinary people speak them, but the defense would enlarge the disproportion created by lines spoken by Edward during a scene of mutual accusations with Lavinia. "What devil left the door on the latch/for these doubts to enter? And then you came back, you/The angel of destruction—just as I felt sure./ In a moment, at your touch, there is nothing but

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How can a magazine edited by a handful of American Catholic laymen, who cannot speak with the authority of the Church, who cannot speak even with the temporal experience of the Church, without arrogance accept the label "Catholic"? Only in this sense. It is as if the lighting of this world—to every Catholic—gave to everything in the world certain values, certain sharp and peculiar values, a certain shape, a certain density. The world appears to him in a special light.

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ruin./ O God, what have I done? The python. The octopus./ Must I become after all what you would make me?" Edward, it must be remembered, is a humorless lawyer, "the dull, the implacable, the indomitable spirit of mediocrity."

Then again the words of Harcourt-Reilly, "Go in peace, my daughter./ Work out your salvation with diligence," have, along with the litanies recited by the Guardians, a coarse sound in the context. They have that obtruding, uneven quality that is associated with a pious, earnest and bludgeoning hand.

The basis for the vocational prescriptions given in this play is something which can also prompt wonderings. After lines which vitalize the oppositions of personal and community life, and perverse notions of love, after apt reflections on those moments when talk is difficult but necessary, and a description of the condition of apathy where people "desire to desire," there is a gentle dismissal of Edward and Lavinia because their way is as good as Celia's way, and an absolution for Peter because he understands his métier.

The dull, implacable mediocrities are placed on the same level with the sacrificial figure. Both ways are necessary, according to Harcourt-Reilly, both are good. "Two people who know they do not understand each other,/Breeding children whom they do not understand/And who will never understand them," make a choice and justify themselves as decisively as the woman who accepts a life of isolation and suffering. This may represent the ultimate position of charity for Eliot. It may be an expression of his association with all men because they retain necessarily some of the goodness which proceeds from the hand of their Creator. This equalization of motives could be a humble forbearance from judgment, the acknowledgment that, despite the ignorance and cowardice and falseness which persist, the world is totally good.

And yet if our critics stop their protests, if our poets desist from jeremiads that the world is "seared, bleared and smeared," if our artists quit showing us things as they ought to be, then the lukewarm universe of total goodness in which personal goodness and sacrifice are difficult to detect may become even more tepid, even more hostile to workers of imagination. It would be interesting if Eliot's next modern protagonist, unlike Celia who chose without knowing what she chose or why she chose, were a new Marchenoi who would hold his guts in his hands as he wandered among the cold stones which house the second-rate movies and the cocktail parties, could shout terrible warnings to all mediocre persons before he wilfully assumed the burden of his destruction and their salvation. GEORGE MILES.

The Feast. Margaret Kennedy. Rinehart. \$3.00.

FOR the last twenty-five years, through seven other novels, forty short stories, and thirty screen plays, Margaret Kennedy has been known as the author of

THE COMMONWEAL

The Constant Nymph. After her new novel, *The Feast*, has made its way up and down the best-seller lists, Miss Kennedy will continue to be known as the author of *The Constant Nymph*. For *The Feast*, although written with expert craftsmanship and humor, is little more than slick entertainment, with all the permanent values of a serial in last year's *Ladies' Home Journal*. Which it was.

The idea for this novel first came to Miss Kennedy in 1937 after seeing a medieval masque of the Seven Deadly Sins. She tried to envision the old formula in modern dress, and developed contemporary characters to personify each of the traditional sins.

Fortunately, she realized somewhere along the way that her readers would not be able to work up much sympathy for such a villainous assemblage, and she introduced a secondary assortment of characters, perhaps a little more nerve-wracked than necessary even for post-war Britain, but salvageable and decidedly engaging. These newcomers provide such entertaining reading that they force the evil crew to the periphery of the story. But instead of junking the Sinners entirely, Miss Kennedy makes them a set of stock villains, each one an obstacle to the happiness of one or more of the good folk. Seven out-and-out villains are a heavy load for any novel, but they might still have been assimilated into the story if the plot were honestly developed. However, the author falls back on a mechanical contrivance—a landslide—to resolve her conflicts. The evil are destroyed; the good are rewarded; and the Literary Guild subscribers can go happily on to their May selection.

CAROL H. WEISS.

The Lost Traveller. Antonia White. Viking. \$3.00.

FIFTEEN years ago Antonia White made a clever, amusing, and bitter-sweet novel out of her experiences as a child suddenly introduced by a convert father to the disciplined gentility of a famous English convent school.

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MURRAY BALLANTYNE.

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• REVIEWERS •

RICHARD M. WEAVER is a member of the faculty of the University of Chicago, and the author of *Ideas Have Consequences*.

REV. LEO J. TRESE is pastor of St. Patrick's Church in Carleton, Michigan, and author of the recently published *Vessel of Clay*.

JOHN HAY is a poet and critic who lives on Cape Cod.

GEORGE MILES is a free-lance critic.

CAROL H. WEISS recently received her MA degree from Columbia, and is now an executive of a national community service organization.

MURRAY BALLANTYNE was until recently editor of Canada's *The Ensign*.

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